

CHAPTER 2

VISION STATEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

In 1995 the citizens of Roanoke County initiated a strategic planning process called visioning. The purpose of this process was to build a vision for the future of Roanoke County that is based on community consensus and reflects the community's values.

In March 1995 a thirteen-member citizen Steering Committee was formed to administer and guide the vision process. The Steering Committee formed ten focus groups to discuss and prepare recommendations on the following topics: Agriculture and Forestry, Economic Development, Public Education, Technology, Resource Preservation, Transportation, Growth Management and Planning, Government Relations, Recreation and Culture and Housing. These focus groups involved over 200 citizen volunteers.

The focus groups met throughout the summer of 1995 and in the fall presented their recommendations to the Steering Committee and Board of Supervisors. There were five key issues, or principles of action, that emerged from the focus group reports. These issues cut across the thinking that County citizens brought to the vision process and are as follows:

COMMUNITY-WIDE THEMES

1. Regionalism - The County must take the lead in finding new and innovative ways to look beyond its political boundaries for solutions to the challenges of the next century.
2. Sustainability - Recognizing that our natural systems are vital to providing both economic needs and quality of life for all citizens, sustainable development has been incorporated into County planning -- meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
3. Community Identity - Roanoke County citizens identify very closely with their neighborhoods and school districts. Efforts must be made to preserve the elements of community identity that provide gathering places for the exchange of information and support.
4. Scenic Beauty - The mountains that surround the County provide a sense of place and are a source of beauty, recreational activity and inspiration. Steps must be taken to develop sound conservation policies for our dwindling farm lands, mountainsides and ridges, rivers and streams, soil and air. These resources are considered by many to be our region's greatest asset.
5. Quality of Life - The citizens of Roanoke County recognize that there exists a fragile balance between economic growth and prosperity and the preservation of a way of life that is cherished by many. Proactive steps must be taken to manage growth in a positive way - to act

conservatively and with deliberation when making decisions that will affect our high quality of

life and that of our children's children.

In addition to these five broad community-wide themes each focus group developed a vision statement that reflects their discussions about the future of Roanoke County.

VISION STATEMENTS

The following vision statements represent the work of the focus groups and are reprinted here exactly as they were developed by each group.

Government Relations

1. In 2010, Roanoke County is one of a group of regional independent counties and cities, that choose to practice - as an aggressive and proactive policy - broad based, regional collaboration and cooperation in: 1) meeting the current day-to-day needs of the citizens of Roanoke County, and 2) preparing for the challenges and opportunities of the future. In these cooperative efforts, Roanoke County government leads the way, thereby ensuring the prosperity and happiness of the citizens of Roanoke County.

Resource Preservation

1. In 2010, Roanoke County has incorporated principles of sustainability into County ordinances. These principles will maximize energy efficiency and minimize waste and pollution. To assist with this effort, the County has adopted and enacted local interpretations of the recommendations of the "Blueprint for Sustainable Development of Virginia," while bolstering industry through a variety of incentives to adhere to these standards.
2. In 2010, Roanoke County continues to support the educational efforts of Explore Park and includes environmental education in the public school curriculum.
3. In 2010, Roanoke County has enacted ordinances and programs to preserve the integrity of the surrounding mountains and open space. These include mountainside, ridgeline and natural resource protection.
4. In 2010, Roanoke County has identified the area's diverse flora and faunal resources by means of a comprehensive survey and makes use of this information in designating sites to be protected as preserves, parks, greenways and other natural corridors connecting critical habitats.

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5. In 2010, Roanoke County has established tax incentives to encourage landowners to dedicate their mountain land for scenic and conservation easements. This has been supplemented by purchases of land by a Natural and Scenic Resources Foundation - a local land trust.
6. In 2010, Roanoke County has participated in a regional effort to identify and protect viewsheds along the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Appalachian Trail.
7. In 2010, Roanoke County has established sound growth management policies that preserve the region's scenic assets and natural resources while allowing residential development that includes open spaces, parks, cluster development and rural villages.
8. In 2010, Roanoke County continues to recognize the economic and scenic value of its farm lands and has actively participated in promoting the economic viability of the rural lifestyle.
9. In 2010, Roanoke County citizens exhibit a strong public and private sector commitment to the preservation of Roanoke County's distinctive cultural heritage -- its historic buildings and landscapes, archaeological sites and folk traditions. Recognizing that the architectural and archaeological records of this valley lend character and identity to our area, historic preservation has become an important tool for economic development. Through efforts to identify heritage resources, through cultural heritage education in the public schools and through cooperative efforts with other groups, the County has, over the last 15 years, set the standard for a sound preservation ethic.
10. In 2010, Roanoke County has implemented the "Recommendations for Planning" produced as a result of the architectural survey of 1991-1992. The County has also initiated a similar archaeological survey.
11. In 2010, Roanoke County community libraries have established local archives which house video and audio tape oral histories, copies of family trees, diaries, and pertinent newspaper articles and books that document each community's unique history.
12. In 2010, Roanoke County has mountain festivals, jamborees, fiddler conventions, story telling festivals, and pow-wows that are used to preserve interest in and knowledge of local folk traditions.

Housing

1. In 2010, Roanoke County has developed incentives and a sliding scale of fees to encourage affordable housing. Housing costs have been addressed by controlling utility connection fees, erosion control requirements and waste disposal options.
2. In 2010, Roanoke County has a diverse housing stock meeting the demands of current and future residents. Dwellings are available in a range of prices, styles and designs to accommodate students, single persons, the elderly and families. Alternatives to single

family ownership are being met by an adequate supply of apartments, duplexes, attached housing, senior services and nursing homes for rent.

3. In 2010, Roanoke County has managed a healthy economic growth while protecting and maintaining its natural resources. Through careful planning and orderly development, our natural resources have been protected to ensure the quality of life for future generations. Open spaces and greenways have been provided through the use of cluster development and innovative site design concepts.
4. In 2010, Roanoke County has taken a leadership role in valleywide cooperative efforts to hold the cost of public services to a relatively low level. Services have been extended, in a planned and orderly manner, to meet housing demands.

Transportation

1. In 2010, Roanoke County roads are well maintained. New roads are initiated and planned in cooperation with VDOT and with a high level of citizen participation. Transportation planning is carried out in conjunction with the County Comprehensive Plan. New roads are designed to accommodate large vehicles and incorporate new technology wherever possible. The design and construction of new roads are accomplished in an environmentally sensitive manner, protecting natural resources and minimizing various forms of pollution.
2. In 2010, Roanoke County, Roanoke City and Salem City have encouraged the growth of public transit throughout the Roanoke Valley. An active and successful public relations campaign has resulted in increased ridership. Public transit is now a vital link in the Valley's multi-modal transportation network.
3. In 2010, Roanoke County has incorporated the efficient movement of freight into the overall transportation system design. The new Inland Port has given southwest Virginia's industries a promising global connection.
4. In 2010, Roanoke County has incorporated the use of bicycle trails, pedestrian walkways and greenways into the transportation network.
5. In 2010, Roanoke County has embarked on a multi-purpose light rail project. This project serves as a valuable transportation and recreational facility for residents and visitors alike.

Growth Management and Planning

1. In 2010, Roanoke County growth management provides for greenways and open space as an integral part of communities and individual lifestyles.
2. In 2010, Roanoke County has addressed the impacts of strategies to provide for sustainability within growth management.
3. In 2010, Roanoke County communities have small commercial nodes and business opportunities that serve local areas. This strategy has encouraged and enabled citizens to use alternative forms of transportation such as pedestrian corridors, bicycle paths and public transit.
4. In 2010, Roanoke County allows flexibility, within a consistent framework of sustainable development, to encourage community redevelopment, commercial development, infill development and industrial revitalization while preserving neighborhood stability and property values. This planning process is successful due to extensive community and private sector involvement.
5. In 2010, Roanoke County transportation planning is an integral part of growth management strategies. Following through with a trend begun in 1995, Roanoke County citizens have continued to be pro-active participants in the transportation planning process.
6. In 2010, Roanoke County growth management strategies and sustainability are guided and measured by a system of benchmarks established with citizen input. This results in a highly involved citizenry who are knowledgeable in planning principles, who proactively participate in the planning process, and who believe they can influence the process.

Agriculture and Forestry

1. In 2010, Roanoke County has taken action to identify and establish distinct rural areas worthy of preservation that will balance the rights of property owners while protecting the productive value of rural lands.
2. In 2010, Roanoke County has implemented policies to tax rural land on its specific value for agriculture and/or forestry production.
3. In 2010, Roanoke County has taken action to reinforce the "right to farm" and there exists a high level of mutual respect among farmers, non-farm owners and rural visitors of individual property rights, responsibilities and privacy.
4. In 2010, Roanoke County has established markets for small- scale farm and forestry products that support and sustain a viable rural land-based economy and robust farmers'

markets in the Valley.

5. In 2010, Roanoke County continues to value, protect and preserve the scenic vistas, water resources and other important natural and cultural resources of the rural areas. There continues to be strong recognition that these resources are critical components of the quality of life of the region.
6. In 2010, Roanoke County has established and has been operating a level of public services, particularly fire and rescue, to the rural areas that is appropriate and consistent with the needs of an aging rural population.
7. In 2010, Roanoke County has established mechanisms so that rural residents are directly represented, consulted, advised and involved in their local government.

Economic Development and Tourism

1. In 2010, Roanoke County has played a major role in developing the Roanoke Valley into a center of industrial and commercial technology by adequately funding the Industrial Development Authority, enabling them to acquire property and providing the infrastructure to encourage economic growth.
2. In 2010, Roanoke County and the surrounding areas have become a natural playground for visitors and residents. The local governments have provided the necessary infrastructure to permit full usage and enjoyment of our scenic resources - both private and public - such as a regional greenway system, pedestrian-friendly roads, campgrounds and recreational vehicle parking areas. Strong incentives have been put into place to encourage developers to include dedicated lands and connected greenways in all new development projects.
3. In 2010, Roanoke County has taken the lead to preserve our most valuable natural asset, the scenic environment and natural ridge lines of the mountains surrounding the Roanoke Valley.

Recreation and Culture

1. In 2010, Roanoke County - through unique initiatives and as a result of reciprocal arrangements and partnership efforts with neighboring local governments and private entities- is nationally known as a preeminent East Coast recreational and cultural center and is the major recreational and cultural center on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Awareness of the County's unique and high-quality recreational and cultural programs is reflected in large audiences, a high level of individual participation and volunteer activity, broad-based financial support, a healthy citizenry and increased tourism.

Technology and Communications

1. In 2010, Roanoke County provides its citizens opportunities to interface with each other, the capability to access local and global community services through the latest communications technologies and encourages - through both public and private means - the use of the latest technologies to enhance the quality of life in the Roanoke Valley.
2. In 2010, Roanoke County encourages technological improvements/innovations in manufacturing, power transmission, communications, commerce and transportation to reserve and enhance the natural resources of the Roanoke Valley. Roanoke County facilitates a managed technological environment that balances education, productivity, social skills, health and the ecosystem.
3. In 2010, Roanoke County affords its citizens opportunities - through technical schools, extension programs, and a four-year college of higher learning - to obtain the technological skills required to work and function in a rapidly changing world.

Public Education

1. In 2010, Roanoke County provides access to world-class educational services to all citizens. The educational focus is to prepare learners for the work place and to develop in them characteristics of responsible, productive members of society for whom learning is a lifelong endeavor.

